

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions, and listings, of claims in this application.

1. (Currently Amended) A water based ink composition for a ballpoint pen which comprises (i) a thickener which is associative and swells in an alkaline medium, said thickener comprising a polymer having a carboxyl group and a hydrophobic group selected from the group consisting of a linear hydrocarbon, a halogenated alkyl, an organosilicon group, and a fluorinated carbon group, (ii) a pigment ~~whose~~ particles having a diameter of 500 nm or less which have been ~~are~~ subjected to surface treatment with a water soluble polymer and a surfactant, (iii) a polar solvent comprising water and other water-miscible solvents and (iv) a pH controlling agent, wherein the pigment particle diameter is stable at room temperature over a 6 month period and the water based ink composition has a viscosity of 100 mPa·s or more.

2. (Previously Presented) The water based ink composition for a ballpoint pen as described in claim 1, wherein the thickener is contained in a proportion of 0.1 to 8% by weight based on the ink composition and dissolves and swells in the polar solvent to associate with the particle surface of the pigment, thereby increasing the ink viscosity.

3-4. (Canceled)

5. (Previously Presented) The water based ink composition of claim 1, wherein said thickener is present in the amount of 0.1 to 2.0% by weight based on the ink composition.

6. (Previously Presented) The water based ink composition for a ballpoint pen of claim 1 wherein the hydrophobic group is a linear hydrocarbon.

7. (Previously Presented) The water based ink composition for a ballpoint pen of claim 1 wherein the hydrophobic group is a halogenated alkyl.

8. (Previously Presented) The water based ink composition for a ballpoint pen of claim 1 wherein the hydrophobic group is an organosilicon group.

9. (Previously Presented) The water based ink composition for a ballpoint pen of claim 1 wherein the hydrophobic group is a fluorinated carbon group.